

# Local Joint Consultative Panel

A meeting of Local Joint Consultative Panel was held on Monday, 15th March, 2010.

**Present:** Cllr Terry Laing (Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Roy Rix, Ms J Asquith (UNITE), J Stockill and A Woodmass (UNISON)

**Officers:** D MacDonald, Mrs J Spittle (R), Mrs T Harrison (LD)

**Also in attendance:** No other persons were present

**Apologies:** Cllr Ken Lupton, A Christon (GMB), G Wilson (UNISON)

## 1 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Beall and Rix declared personal prejudicial interests in the item entitled 'Single Status' due to the fact that their partners were employed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Cllr Beall declared a personal /non prejudicial interest in relation to the item entitled 'Health and Safety Report' due to the fact that he sat on the chair of governors for Rosebrook School.

## 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2009

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2009.

It was noted that Cllr Patterson's attendance was noted but he was not in attendance.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting were agreed upon the removal of Cllr Patterson from the attendance.

## 3 Health and Safety Report

The panel were provided with accident and assault statistics which had been reported to the office of the Health and Safety Manager via the formal notification procedure for the period 1st December 2009 - 28th February 2010.

Details of 'reportable accidents' (reportable to the Health and Safety Executive); incidents and assaults were provided.

The panel also received information regarding Health and Safety training delivered well-being referrals and Health and well-being initiatives for which a bronze award was given to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council during the period 1st December 2009 - 28th February 2010. Work had begun to obtain the next level of award for the following years Health and well-being initiatives.

The panel queried whether the correct use of accident report books had increased and were advised that a variety of communications had been sent out reminding all employees of the accident book and the accident procedure. The Health and Safety Unit had made every effort to inform employees what needed to be done if an accident occurred.

Members were reminded that it was the responsibility of the injured employee, their supervisor or another, acting on their behalf, to ensure that the accident book and form were completed in a timely manner.

However if an employee only filled out the accident book but did not complete a form it would not be picked up straight away by the Health and Safety Unit. In those circumstances, where workplace accidents occurred which resulted in lost time absences, the Health and Safety Unit would be alerted to the absence via the Absence Management Team and therefore capture any missing accident details.

Panel members requested that a specific person be assigned for specific localities on a long term basis therefore encouraging familiarity of the person and the location. Members felt that it was important for the Health and Safety team to know who held and were responsible for the accident books.

An officer observed that the statutory requirement was for the accident book and the form to be completed; however the most essential was the accident form. Officers advised that the Health and Safety team did not need to know who held local accident books as they were in possession of the accident forms; it was the responsibility of the injured employee and the holder of the accident book to ensure that the accident book and form were completed.

Members requested quarterly health and wellbeing figures to help identify trends.

Members also requested to see a breakdown of referrals to the Health and Wellbeing team (formally the Back Care Programme) to identify services referrals.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Communications through the Council's electronic notice board and emails will continue to act as a prompt or education to employees on the need to complete the accident book and form if an accident occurs.
3. A breakdown of referrals to the Health and Wellbeing team be provided at the next meeting to identify services referrals.

#### **4 Single Status**

Members were provided with an update report on the progress of the job evaluation reviews/appeals process and salary protection.

Members were advised that 47 appeals had been received, the outcomes of which would be provided at the meeting in June 2010.

Officers advised that salary protection had been given to employees where their total remuneration for their normal working week had been reduced as a result of the implementation of single status.

There would be approximately 326 employees who would still be in detriment on 31st March 2011.

Members were advised that development opportunities were available to employees who were in detriment following the impact of single status. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council had signed up to the skills pledge to enable affected employees to gain NVQ 2's and some NVQ 3's.

Members requested a more detailed breakdown of the figures affect by single status.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. A more detailed breakdown of the figures affected by single status be provided to Members.

## **5 EIT Review Summaries**

The Chairman noted that all the recommendations from the Efficiency and Improvement (EIT) Reviews had been accepted by Cabinet. However, this item had been put on the agenda at the request of Union representatives as some unions had stated that they were not involved in the EIT reviews. It transpired that the unions had been involved in all but a few of the EIT reviews and those unions were dealing with the issue directly with the relevant officers.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

## **6 Apprenticeship Schemes**

Responsibility for the Council's Apprenticeship programme was shared between Human Resources and Economic Development. The service was recently restructured to meet the current drivers for change at national, regional and local level as well as increasing the range of opportunities in respect of hard to reach groups as part of the council's aims and objectives (workforce development/ employability, health and community cohesion).

In January 2010 41 apprentices where place within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council at level 2 and 15 apprentices at level 3. The Council were implementing a number of additional programmes which would increase the number further.

Funding had been obtained for 6 Horticultural apprentices within Care for your Area which would commence in the new financial year. An apprentice scheme had also been developed in Youth Work.

Officers were looking at schemes to encourage managers to use apprentices.

Members discussed the costs of apprenticeships due to the fact that department budgets were reduced. A way of addressing the issue would be to ring fence vacancies to provide savings and provide apprenticeships.

Members queried whether apprentice's received full training; officers advised that a full range of training was given.

Members queried how many of the Council's young apprentices were looked after by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. Officers advised that it would be investigated and fed back to Members.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.

2. Officers will investigate how many of the Council's young apprentices were looked after by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and report back to the Panel.

## **7 Agency Workers**

Members considered a report, which provided statistical information of agency workers further to Members requests.

A review was carried out by the Corporate Review Working Group to investigate how agency workers were procured and whether it was value for money. The findings showed significant variations in the value for money although in DNS where usage of agency workers was highest, good value for money was achieved.

Following the results of the review it was agreed that an 'in house' managed service for the engagement of agency workers would be implemented and that a framework agreement would be tendered to ensure value for money was achieved across the council.

In addition and in collaboration with Darlington Borough Council and agency framework agreement was tendered and a number of agencies were appointed. The framework was expected to achieve additional savings.

Members felt that there was an imbalance of manager's vacancies however Xentral had not felt that there was the case.

Members requested information on how much money had been saved.

Members observed that once work had been re-engineered then fewer agency staff were required but there had not appeared to be a significant reduction.

Members were advised that the details on saving would be provided at the next meeting and a number of agency workers would be replaced with permanent staff in the municipal year 2010-2011.

Members requested that details of the business plan be provided to Members and an officer from Xentral be invited to the next meeting to answer question's regarding the number of agency workers in Xentral and address the concern's raised regarding the imbalance in management vacancies.

Members suggested that periodic briefings be provided to Local Joint Consultative Panel after the quarterly reports went to Cabinet and Council.

Member's observed that there were high numbers of agency workers used as seasonal staff; however street cleansing and refuse had been re-organised so the figures for agency workers should have been reduced. Members therefore requested that amended figures were provided and further breakdowns were provided. Members requested that the Head of Service responsible for street cleansing and refuse be invited to the next meeting to discuss issues related to agency workers in the afore mentioned services.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Details of the savings achieved will be provided.
2. Details of the business plan will be provided.
3. An officer from Xentral will be invited to the next meeting to answer question's regarding the number of agency workers in Xentral and address the concern's raised regarding the imbalance in management vacancies.
4. Periodic briefings will be provided to Local Joint Consultative Panel after the quarterly reports go to Cabinet and Council.
5. Amended figures and further breakdowns will be provided relating to seasonal staff in particular, street cleansing and refuse staff.
6. The Head of Service responsible for street cleansing and refuse will be invited to the next meeting to discuss issues related to agency workers in the afore mentioned services.

## **8 Workers Memorial Day**

Members were informed that International Workers Memorial Day was intended to remember all those killed at or by work, and to strengthen resolve to reduce risks and protect people from injury and death in the workplace and their causes.

Since 1989 Trade Unions in the USA, UK, Asia, Europe and Africa have organised events on and around 28th April to commemorate the event.

Within the Council, a Health and Safety Representative of the local Unison Branch Office invites the Mayor to mark the occasion each year. In 2009 the Mayor planted a tree in Billingham Cemetery.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) undertook a consultation on the Government's proposals for the official recognition of Workers Memorial day; as a result the Government announced that Workers Memorial Day would be officially recognised from 28th April 2010. However, each local authority would be left to decide for themselves if they would recognise the day.

Members expressed a desire for the event to become a formal, recognised event for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and discussed how it could be achieved. It was observed that it would need to go to Members Advisory Panel and would need to be discussed by all the party groups.

It was hoped that the unison representatives would extend the invitations to all Members for the 2010 event.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. An item come to Member's Advisory Panel requesting that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council officially recognised International Workers Memorial Day on 28th April 2010.
3. Until such time that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council officially recognised the event it was hoped that Unison would invite all Members to their commemoration of the event.

## **9 Car Parking - Charges/Reserved spaces**

Discussion took place regarding the new car parking regulations and charges.

Members were advised that a meeting had been arranged between the unions and the Head of Human Resources, if issues were not resolved at that meeting the matter would come back to Local Joint Consultative Panel.

CONCLUDED that if issues were not resolved at that meeting between unions and the Head of Human Resources, the matter would come back to Local Joint Consultative Panel.

## **10 Future Meeting Dates**

Members were notified that future meeting dates for the municipal year 2010 - 2011, had been agreed by the Chairman and would be sent out to Members.

CONCLUDED that members would receive details of future meeting dates for the municipal year 2010 - 2011